

April 2003

Collaborative Print Retention Pilot Projects

Thomas A. Peters

Committee on Institutional Cooperation

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Peters, Thomas A. (2003) "Collaborative Print Retention Pilot Projects," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 15: Iss. 2, Article 6.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4016>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

REMEMBER WHEN?

Subscription Agencies were *service* businesses and your account was as important as any other account your agency handled?

Basch Subscriptions, Inc. provides serial *service* that saves you and your library both time and money. Any agency will take your order, only **Basch Subscriptions, Inc.** will prove its commitment every day with the personal service you deserve.




Services for Libraries and Publishers
Basch Subscriptions, Inc.

88 N. Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Phone: (603) 229-0662
Fax: (603) 226-9443
E-Mail: Subs@Basch.com

Print Versus Retention from page 1

Robert Alan and Nan Butkovich explore this issue from both the library technical and public services perspectives. They describe a transition period for libraries as we allocate an extensive amount of resources to manage both print and electronic resources at the same time. They argue that electronic access is good for our users, but is complicated, costly and time consuming in terms of management. They refer the reader to specific options that the **Pennsylvania State University Libraries** is taking while learning how to better manage their growing electronic collection.

I saw a common theme throughout these papers and that was the concern over the financial implications of print versus electronic. Many of the papers focused on money. As our libraries and institutions struggle with budget reductions, I think this factor will take on an even greater significance in how we view our collections and what we decide we can afford to retain in terms of redundancy among print and electronic collections. 

Rumors

from page 16

Chepesiuk <dmonitor1@yahoo.com> (I wonder if he ever stops!). He was writing from **Bangladesh** where he is a **Fulbright scholar** in journalism. He is getting a close up look at the War. **The Daily Star**, the **New York Times** of

continued on page 28

Collaborative Print Retention Pilot Projects

by **Thomas A. Peters** (Committee on Institutional Cooperation)

Introduction

Although people have been retaining print since incunabula were pups (or pulp), suddenly print retention is a hot topic. **Reilly** (2002) describes it as a "crisis in collection storage." **DesRosiers** (2002) notes, "Librarians are joining up with colleagues at neighboring institutions to develop joint collections, to undertake local deduplication projects, to assign 'last copy' responsibilities among themselves and to develop joint storage or shelving facilities."

Why has print retention become one of the burning issues of our time? It reveals our current cultural schizophrenia. On the one hand, electronic publishing has caused some educated people to denounce digital content and reaffirm their love of print. On the other hand, certain types of printed publications, such as reference books and scholarly journals, have become problems for academic libraries. **Kaufman** (2002) notes, "...the artifacts of paper-based communication are piling up in our libraries and are becoming an ever more expensive problem." Many users seem to prefer—or at least accept—electronic versions of some publications, so libraries, in a general bind for resources and space, see some value in an orderly retreat from printed journals. If not already the case, soon we may face situations where many libraries find themselves investing in print journal collections at levels out of kilter with the value and use their users place on printed information. Retaining print may become a dubious activity open to challenge from users, parent organizations, funding agencies, and fellow librarians.

Although everyone knows a printed document when they see one, the meaning of committing to retain a collection of printed documents is open to interpretation. The notions of light and dark archives come into play, as well as centralized and decentralized archives. The terms of commitment need to be articulated. The need for a coordinated print retention strategy is palpable. A report from the Center for Research Libraries Collection Assessment Task Force, chaired by **Ross Atkinson** from **Cornell**, notes, "The primary reasons for retaining paper copies will probably be (a) for occasional access to older materials that have never been digitized, (b) as paper back-ups (safety copies) of items that have been digitized, (c) for the opportu-

nity to re-digitize materials, as needed, from the originals, and (d) for artifactual purposes."

This article describes three projects involving collaborative attempts to address the print retention problem. All three focus on the orderly retention of printed versions of journals for which e-versions exist.

Committee on Institutional Cooperation

In June 2000, discussions began in the **Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC)** about developing policies for the retention of printed copies of journals available electronically. The Collection Development Officers and Electronic Resources Officers created a Format Duplication Task Force with the following goal: "Create a fair and reliable mechanism that will allow **CIC** libraries to cancel print copies of titles available in electronic format and insure one print copy of each title is retained in the consortium for research and archival purposes." **Bonnie MacEwan** (**Penn State University**) and **Lou Pitschmann** (then at the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**) initially led the group. **Ed Shreeves** (**University of Iowa**) and **Carole Armstrong** (**Michigan State University**) later took the lead.

In late 2000, **Jan Palmer**, a U. of **Michigan** post-doc, analyzed current practices, discussions, and policies regarding print retention at **CIC** member universities. When asked whether or not a **CIC** collaborative print retention project would make local decisions to cancel print subscriptions more feasible, eleven of the respondents indicated that a consortial initiative would be at least somewhat beneficial. One collection development officer, however, cautioned that faculty opposition to the remote storage or cancellation of printed journals could become inflamed by the added concept of sharing archiving responsibilities with other **CIC** member universities.

In December 2001, a project proposal was submitted to the **CIC** Library Directors, with copies to the Technical Services Directors, Public Services Directors, the Preservation Officers, and the Interlibrary Loan Directors. The proposal noted that the archiving of and long-term access to e-versions of scholarly journals were not sufficiently mature and robust. "The archiving of elec-

continued on page 20

tronic journals is still in an embryonic stage with no widely accepted standards and no guarantees of what the archive will be in the future. Some predict that only certain parts of journals will be retained in the archive while other proposals talk about not keeping all text available on the latest useable technology." The **CIC** proposal was one way to complement—or hedge our bets concerning—recent e-journal archiving pilot projects, particularly during these transition years when both print and electronic versions of journals are published. The project also serves as a springboard to other types of collaborative collection management programs among interested **CIC** member libraries.

By the time the collaborative print retention project began, most **CIC** member libraries were actively considering or engaged in selectively canceling print subscriptions (sometimes duplicate print subscriptions) for journal titles that were available electronically. The group decided that a publisher-based approach would work best, and the titles published through **Academic Press IDEAL** were selected for the first phase of the pilot project.

After much discussion and input from various stakeholder groups, the project team decided to rely on one copy residing in a decentralized, light archive, rather than two copies, with one kept in a dark archive. On-site access to the bound volumes and interlibrary loaning of photocopies of individual articles would be possible. As **Ed Shreeves** pointed out to the group, there were several practical reasons to avoid special storage and extra security for the proposed distributed print retention archive. These extra measures would complicate and delay the project at a time when several member libraries were involved in serials cancellation projects. It would be difficult for some libraries to meet stringent guidelines for the security and environmental controls that a dark archive implies. The decision to begin with a light archive involved the assumption of considerable risk. Damage to the print archive through use, mutilation, theft, environmental damage, and photocopying or scanning could be substantial. Each participating library must regularly monitor the completeness of the print runs of the titles they have agreed to retain. Some stakeholder groups were dismayed by this decision.

Temporally, the **CIC** collaborative print retention project is constricted in at least two ways. First, when a library agrees to retain the printed version of a title, the protected run commences with the current volume year. The agreement does not apply retrospectively to backruns. Second, the commitment is not perpetual, but only for five years. The goal was to keep the hurdles to participation and success as low as possible.

Managing the title adoption process was a challenge in itself. The **CIC** opted for the expedient process of spreadsheets attached to email messages. One downside was that multiple libraries expressed interest in retaining the print versions of several titles. After the initial round of de-duping, some title-swapping and load-leveling occurred so that the fairness com-

ponent of the original goal was not ignored. We also circulated the list of orphaned **IDEAL** titles to which no one committed during the first round of the commitment process, hoping that a few more would be picked up. A memorandum of commitment was drafted and submitted to the **CIC** Library Directors for their approval and signatures.

One of the beauties of the **CIC** collaborative effort is that it is declarative, rather than prescriptive. One library simply declares that, for the next five years, it agrees to retain a run of the printed version of the specified journal title. The **CDOs/EROs** wanted the collaborative print retention agreement to be easily understood, inexpensively implemented, quickly operational, and eminently scalable. No attempt is made to prescribe how the other twelve libraries should respond to and act upon the set of declarations. Whether or not any of the other libraries retain their print runs of those titles remains entirely at the discretion of the individual libraries, as they factor in local demand for the printed version of the title, areas of academic excellence at their universities, storage costs and constraints, and state-based commitments to resource sharing.

Center for Research Libraries

Early in 2002, the **Center for Research Libraries (CRL)** received a two-year grant from the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** to develop and test a system for the "distributed, long-term retention of artifactual collections." (DesRosiers 2002). **CRL** intends to acquire and retain complete print runs for scholarly journals available electronically through **JSTOR**. The project plan identifies five essential development areas: economics, agreement framework and logistical support, dual archives (distributed light and centralized dark), terms and conditions, and risk analyses (DesRosiers 2002). A dark copy ("meant for use only in cases of catastrophic loss or other exigent circumstances") will be stored at **CRL**, with regional access copies held in distributed locations

(DesRosiers 2002). **CRL** is working with three partner universities—**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**, **Michigan State University**, and **Yale University**—on the initial stages of the project. The **Center** also is exploring the development of a national registry system for print archives and last copies, possibly through a bibliographic utility such as **RLIN** or **OCLC**. "Third parties will have the ability to search the registry, locate the corresponding terms and conditions online and decide whether the conditions and number of copies stored are sufficient for them to remove the material from their own shelves." (DesRosiers 2002)

University of California System

The **University of California System** also has a pilot project underway to build and maintain a centralized shared print journal collection. The **Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee (SLASIAC)** is coordinating the effort and es-

tablishing policies. As with the **CIC** pilot project, the initial agreements and collections are being built along publisher lines. The California project has focused first on journals published by **Elsevier** and the **Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)**. As **UC's** long-term plans for a print journal collection develop, they may take another approach. The **UC Collection Development Committee (CDC)** has appointed an operational task force to address the processing, management, and service issues related to handling the printed versions of journals available online. The printed issues will be received, claimed and processed by **UCLA** and deposited in the Southern Regional Library Facility on the **UCLA** campus. There seems to be systemwide agreement that the shared collection will be called the **University of California Libraries** collection and that holdings will be counted by all campuses.

Some Issues

Of course, the question concerning print retention need not be reduced to an either/or proposition. A library may decide to retain a printed publication for a limited time, or shelve it in remote, compact storage, or not subject it to binding or other basic preservation activities, yet still retain the print. The main ingredients for a viable, sustainable, collaborative print retention system are commitments with teeth (but also escape provisions), records that ensure institutional memory, and information that provides all parties the opportunity to make truly informed decisions regarding what is retained. The **CIC** project has opted initially for a distributed light archive, the **CRL** project is beginning with dual archives, and the **UC System** project will be a centralized light archive.

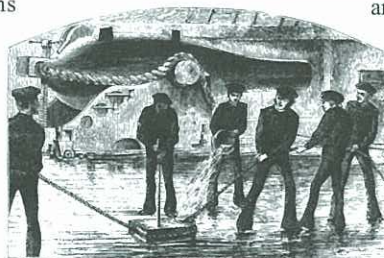
Good pilot projects reveal the issues and disagreements among the stakeholders. Some collection development officers are attracted to collaborative distributed print retention agreements because they want to contain serials costs and utilize space well. Pres-

ervation officers often advocate for dark archives with sufficient redundancy to ensure that any printed article within the defined corpus would always be readily available. The dark archive serves as the resource of last resort. They are much more comfort-

able with the model proposed by **CRL**. They also are concerned about how to ensure and verify the completeness of the archive at the point of intake or agreement.

Technical services directors are interested in recording these decisions and commitments with sufficient clarity and redundancy in internal library record keeping systems so that other librarians and staff members who run across these agreements will be able to easily understand the terms and expectations of the agreement. The goal is to avoid the inadvertent cancellation of a subscription by a library that it had agreed to keep as part of a collaborative print retention agreement. The information

continued on page 22



needs to be readily available to a variety of persons involved in a serials cancellation project, including subject specialists making decisions and acquisitions staff members who actually implement cancellation or non-renewal decisions. A related issue involves how broadly the knowledge of these commitments should be disseminated. Should this information be available only to the member universities of the consortium, or should it be made publicly available on a Website?

There are several impediments to a viable collaborative print retention program. Assuaging users' fears and gaining their acceptance could be difficult. Some journal publishers prohibit e-only subscriptions, and others have pricing schemes and agreement terms that make the continuation of dual print and electronic subscriptions attractive. National initiatives are relatively easy to conceptualize, but very difficult to implement and sustain. **Reilly** (2002) suggests that a national print retention program could be modeled on the national energy grid that "does a surprisingly effective job of balancing local or self-interest against the broader public good." **Kaufman** (2002) cautions, "To succeed, a national system for distributed preservation of artifactual materials must be incremental and scalable, risk-averse, voluntary, transparent, and economically sustainable."

Several unanswered questions remain. When will the lion's share of journals become electronic-only publications? How long do these coordinated print retention agreements need to be in place? **Reilly** (2002) suggests that the grid of commitments and agreements should be formalized, strengthened, and lengthened gradually.

Conclusion

Evidently, the laws of thermodynamics apply as well to hot topics as to hot objects. The diffusion of heat—cooling—is inevitable. The **CIC** proposal notes, "As changes occur in digital archiving standards and print production the need for retention of print copies of journals may decrease or not be necessary at all." This raises an interesting challenge for collaborative efforts. While most consortial projects focus on opportunities that are emerging and issues that are heating up, in the case of print retention the value of what is being retained may decline over time. Can consortia collaborate in an orderly retreat from print? The challenge with print retention is not necessarily to preserve in perpetuity precious artifacts, but to manage a large, redundant, distributed corpus of printed information that appears to be losing value to the user population at unknown—and probably varying—rates. 🍂

References

- Center for Research Libraries. Collection Assessment Task Force. 2001. Report of the Collection Assessment Task Force. Available online at <http://www.crl.edu/info/collassmntprt.htm>.
- DesRosiers, Barbara. 2002. Mellon grant to test distributed print archive model. *FOCUS on the Center for Research Libraries* 22 (2): 9-11. Available only online at <http://www.crl.edu/info/focus/XXIIv2/Dec02Focus.pdf>.
- Kaufman, Paula. 2002. Can we develop a national strategy for print copies? *Scholarly Communication Issues: A Newsletter for the UIUC Community*, no. 18 (May 6). Available online at http://www.library.uiuc.edu/administration/scholarly_communication_issues_18.htm.
- Reilly, Bernard R. 2002. Towards a national hard copy strategy. *FOCUS on The Center for Research Libraries* 21 (3): 1-5. Available online at <http://www.crl.edu/info/focus/Focus%20in%20pdf/302focus.pdf>.

"No One Uses Them So Why Should We Keep Them?" — Scenarios for Print Issue Retention

by **John McDonald** (California Institute of Technology)

Serials and acquisitions librarians suffered through the serials crisis in the 80s, have struggled with electronic journals and "the Big Deal" in the 90s, and are now faced with a new dilemma that seems to be contrary to all that we learned in library school. Print issue retention is a subject that touches on all areas of expertise in librarianship, including acquisitions, collection development, reference, public services, preservation, and archives. The issues associated with print retention are varied and complex and each library will have a unique position to consider when developing institutional policies. This brief piece will attempt to outline the considerations that each library should take into account when debating retention of print journal issues.

The very first assumption that a librarian must confront in this issue is that the electronic version of the journal is preferred over the print by your users. For most users and most libraries, this is undoubtedly the case due to the format's increased accessibility and added functionality. Most libraries experience a sharp decline in use of print issues when electronic access is provided. But if this is not the case, and particular journals, disciplines, or user groups need the print copy as much as, or more so, than the electronic, then the library must do all it can to retain the print copy.

But assuming that your users do prefer the print or use it almost exclusively, what else do you need to consider to conclude that you can forego the purchasing and housing of print volumes? There are three basic benefits to not retaining the print issues of journals that are available electronically: **Money**, in the form of savings associated with subscription, processing, storage; **Time**, in the form of savings in processing, renewals, binding, check-in, and associated serials tasks; and **Space**, in the form of savings on current shelves,

bound volume shelves, and storage areas.

Overall, the most obvious benefit for most libraries is the monetary savings associated with the subscription. Not all publishers have subscription models that allow libraries to take online only, but those that do often offer substantial price savings, at least in the near term, if the library moves to online only. In addition, associated costs in processing and storage are saved as well — libraries no longer need to spend money on bar codes, security strips, binding, circulation, and the associated staff time and training.

In addition to these direct and indirect monetary savings, libraries that choose to forego print issues entirely or retention of issues at some point can see time savings in the form of processing, invoicing, renewals, binding, check-in, circulation, and reshelfing. All of these are less immediate and obvious savings, but each allows an institution to reallocate staff and resources to other tasks.

Lastly, non-retention of print issues can save space. All libraries eventually have space management problems due to constantly expanding collections. Reducing the amount of material received when non-space absorbing formats are available allows a library to free up space for monographs or public and staff areas.

So now that we know non-retention of print issues can save us money, time, and space, there are still a number of considerations to take into account before making the leap. There are four basic scenarios that a library can embrace, with most libraries utilizing a variety of them depending on their local situation.

- **Scenario 1:** Provide access to both formats: retain, process, and store print while managing electronic subscriptions.
- **Scenario 2:** Provide limited print access, but reduce staff processing and/or accessibility (check-in, binding, indefinite storage, and accessibility).
- **Scenario 3:** Provide electronic access but continue to purchase print for archival purposes only.
- **Scenario 4:** Provide electronic access only and take no print.

What considerations will a library need to address before decid-

continued on page 24

